

## **Fast Supper Meals**

Everybody eats but not everybody chooses a healthy diet. Eating a lot does not guarantee that you will get the nutrients you need. There are numerous advantages related to planning your meals.

A great meal does not have to be complicated. Start with meat, fish, or beans, add vegetables and a pantry staple, and you have a meal. It is recommended that a meal have foods from at least three of the five foods groups, but including choices from each food group will help provide balance and variety as you plan your meals.

You will save money by making better use of the food you buy. You will find fewer mysterious moldy gray lumps in your refrigerator. You can shop more effectively by buying those things that you need for specific meals you have already planned. You will also be less likely to impulsively buy something that looks or smells good as you pass the supermarket deli. You can balance a higher calorie lunch with a lower calorie supper.

Planning a week's worth of menus at a time gives you both flexibility and control. Decide what you want and need. Do you want to lose weight? Do you want to cut down on fat and saturated fat? Do you want a diet that gives you a lot of energy for sports and other activities?

Whatever your goals are, you will want a balanced diet, one that contains all the nutrients you need for good health. You can control calories by choosing smaller serving sizes or reducing high-calorie food choices.

Make a list of all the foods you like. Start your menu planning with foods from your list that fit into each food group. Your plan doesn't have to be written in stone. You can plan three or four different breakfasts, for example, and just rotate them or decide the night before. Just make sure you have everything you need. Lunch should be big enough to get you through the long afternoon. A light supper is a good idea. In reality, however, most people eat their largest meal in the evening. Planning ahead can help you keep supper lighter. Try not to eat anything after 8 PM giving your digestive system a rest until breakfast.

It may take several weeks to get the hang of meal planning if you're not use to it. Don't give up. Your health and nutrition will improve when you plan and eat good tasting, low fat, and healthy meals on a regular basis.